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The American Physiological Society
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Nutritional Sciences
The American Association of Immunologists
American Association of Anatomists
The Protein Society
Society for Developmental Biology
American Peptide Society
Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities
The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society for Clinical Investigation
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Teratology Society
The Endocrine Society
The American Society of Human Genetics
Society for Gynecologic Investigation
Environmental Mutagen Society
International Society for Computational Biology
American College of Sports Medicine

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Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

----*Quality Life Through Research*----

September 26, 2006

The Honorable Joe Barton
Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Chairman Barton:

Please accept my thanks again for the opportunity to testify in support of your NIH reauthorization legislation on behalf of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). The biomedical research community continues to support your vision for our nation's premier medical research agency.

I fully appreciate that one of the fundamental questions faced by your committee in producing this legislation was how to balance the responsibility of setting priorities for funding within NIH. FASEB strongly concurs with your view, as delineated in the reauthorization bill, that Congress continue to set overall funding levels for Institutes, Centers and the Common Fund, but that the selection of specific research areas to be funded remains principally the responsibility of NIH, through merit-based peer review. We believe that the NIH has the fullest understanding of not only the human and economic costs of a disease, but also of the scientific challenges and current opportunities that exist in specific areas and more broadly in biomedical research. Moreover, FASEB feels this role will only be strengthened by the portfolio management provisions of the NIH Reform Act.

We thank you for your leadership in protecting NIH from disease-specific funding set asides. From the FASEB perspective, directed research initiatives fail to recognize several principles inherent to the nature of medical research. Basic research, recognized universally as the foundation of most advances in disease-specific research, will inevitably suffer in a politically based system of allocating scarce dollars. Thus, we doubly appreciate your legislation's emphasis on investigator-initiated competitive research. Furthermore, earmarking by disease is not necessarily the way to produce breakthroughs in a particular area, since research in one area often produces unpredictable results that find specific use in another. There are numerous examples of the "serendipity of science" and there will be many more in the future. Disease specific funding runs counter to this well observed phenomenon.

In conclusion, FASEB reiterates its support for the NIH Reform Act of 2006. It is a tremendously successful balance that both improves upon the current system and preserves those aspects that have allowed NIH to achieve its global preeminence in medical research.

Sincerely,

Leo T. Furcht, M.D.
FASEB President